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MINERVA BY NEAL AND COMPANY AND TWO CUPIDS BY RALPH WOOD IN
BUCKINGHAM COLLECTION OF OLD ENGLISH LUSTRE

THE BUCKINGHAM COLLECTION OF OLD ENGLISH LUSTRE

THE English lustre collection made by Miss Lucy Maud Buckingham and presented to the Museum, is now installed in Gunsaulus Hall. It forms an important addition to the other collections of English ceramics to which it is related—the Blaxius Collection of English and American Ceramics and the Gunsaulus Collection of Wedgwood. When R. L. Hobson, the British Museum authority on ceramics, was in this country a few years ago, he saw the collection and pronounced it the most notable group of English lustre he had ever seen.

In studying English lustre it is interesting to trace its origin. The earliest known lustrated pottery is that found in the ruins of Rhages and other ancient cities of Persia. Some of the fragments unearthed date possibly from several centuries before the Christian era. As

early as 1350 a traveler in Spain wrote of a beautifully gilded pottery made at Malaga which was exported to the most distant countries. Lustre was the principal method used by the Moors in Spain for the decoration of their pottery, which was called Hispano-Moresque. In Italy the art was further developed by the Maestro Giorgio Andreoli at Gubbio. In the best examples of Gubbio lustre, merely portions of the surface were decorated with lustre. It was never applied to the entire body, but was used only as high lights, if one may use that term, or over a particular color for the purpose of producing a different quality or added richness of effect. It may be considered some distance from the flashing iridescent lustres of Gubbio to the more subdued and modest Staffordshire lustre, but indeed these were the source of inspiration of the English potter.

The large number of examples of English lustre in the Buckingham Collection, all of which have been selected for the purpose of forming an ideal museum collection, are a revelation of the great variety of ways in which lustre was used by English potters. It demonstrates most forcefully their versatility and technical skill. Nearly all English potters from 1770 to about 1850 made lustre in some form at one time or another. The best period was from 1790 to 1800.

The English potter applied lustre to his cream ware and to brown bodies which were first glazed and fired before the various kinds of lustre were applied. In the early nineteenth century certain potters, such as Minton, Davenport, Josiah Spode II, and others applied lustre to porcelain. However, lustre was more extensively and successfully combined with pottery than with porcelain.

Lustre became so popular that it was used not only on the cheap little mugs adorned with transfer pictures and poems, made to catch the eye of the sailor looking for a present for his sweetheart, but also on Wedgwood garnitures, classic in their refinement of shape. At certain potteries it was limited to simple borders or dainty floral patterns, while at other works the entire object was covered with lustre. After the Napoleonic wars when Georgian silver and Sheffield plate were destroyed, silver lustre came into vogue to take the place of silverware. The potters used silversmiths' moulds and covered their shapes with silver lustre. There are a number of such pieces in this collection—tea-pots with corrugated bodies and pyramid covers, also sugars and ewers.

The English potter had a number of ingenious ways of using lustre, producing it from copper, silver, steel, and gold. From gold he secured the pink lustres of varying shades. One of the most beautiful forms of lustre is the "resist" in which a background of silver

or copper is used with a pattern in white, yellow, or blue. The designs are often of great intricacy and lace-like delicacy. Though transfer decorations of landscapes, portraits, and historic scenes were often duplicated by the different potteries, the lustre borders used with these always varied in design. Indeed, it is the lustre borders rather than the transfers which are the means of identifying the pottery from which they came. Pink lustre was used not only in painting designs and landscapes on a white body, but also to cover the whole object with a filmy glaze upon which transfers were placed. All of these ways of using lustre may be studied in the Buckingham Collection.

The rivalry and competition among the different potters, led by Josiah Wedgwood and Ralph Wood, resulted in many experiments. Many of such pieces were made in limited numbers, among which were unique busts and statuettes and more pretentious statues—things difficult to produce in ceramics. The Buckingham Collection contains a number of these rare examples, which are highly prized and valued by collectors. No effort has been spared to secure such specimens and at the same time those in the finest condition.

Among the rare specimens in the collection are a number of Wedgwood pieces, the most important being his fish set of shell dishes made in 1792. This is one of four sets known to be in existence. Wedgwood studied the shells in his own collection and attempted in his pieces to represent the color of the natural shells as far as possible. He also sought to reproduce something of the color effect he had noticed when in the fall he had seen a yeoman dip a white dish in grape juice. It was in his attempt to produce something novel by the "splash" process of lustre that he perfected his pearl ware. This ware was used first in combination with the "splash" lustre on his shell set. Wedg-



LEEDS GARNITURE WITH SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF MADAME RECAMIER IN
BUCKINGHAM COLLECTION OF OLD ENGLISH LUSTRE

wood's pearl ware was a superior kind of queen's ware and was made from clays of greater purity than those used in queen's ware. While queen's ware was an earlier product made in considerable quantities, pearl ware was never produced extensively. The yellow ground of queen's ware would have impaired the purity of the delicate colors which he wished to secure in his shell dishes, hence his production of the pearl ware. In the Blanxius Collection may be seen a shell plate decorated with pink enamel on pearl ware. The "splash" lustre on the shell set in the Buckingham Collection was produced by a thin application of gold. This extended the glaze of the ware to a purplish pink color on which the metallic reflex of the lustre displayed itself to great advantage.

Besides the other Wedgwood pieces in the collection there is a garniture and a vegetable dish with a red lion on the cover, a cake basket in white with silver lustre floral ornaments, an incense burner in "splash" lustre, and a bust of a Madonna in all-over silver lustre. Especially noteworthy is a bust by Mrs. Lande, who excelled in the modeling of children.

Included in the rare pieces by other potters is a garniture from the Leeds

potteries. It consists of five vases in silver "resist" on a delicate buff with transfers, illustrating scenes from the life of Madame Récamier. These are very important since it is rare to find a group of five vases intact. A whole case is devoted to silver "resist" on canary yellow, which is very rare; this is largely Bristol. A Clewes platter with a painted transfer river scene and a border of pink lustre in colored flowers shown here corresponds with one in Major Cyril Earle's collection, page 23, No. 740. Some of the other unusual examples are a Minerva by Neal and Co. and two Cupids by Ralph Wood, all in pink lustre and intended to be used together as a mantle decoration; a lion in silver lustre by Ralph Wood, a Leeds puzzle jug with lace-like pierced body in all-over silver lustre; and a watch case in the form of a tall clock with figures at the base by Dixon and Austin of the Sunderland potteries. The collection contains a cone shaped ornament with a ball and lion in silver lustre, which was placed as an advertisement in stores where lustre was sold.

From the aesthetic viewpoint the Wedgwood pieces are among those most attractive. His remarkable taste as an artist combined with his indefatigable

persistence as a potter is to be found in his lustre ware as well as in his jasper and other wares. It is the refinement and beautiful proportions of his forms and the exquisiteness of the color in such effects as his "splash" and "vermicelli" lustre that seem to set off his works from those of his contemporaries. Even in such pieces as his cake basket, which is more of a technical than an aesthetic achievement, one marvels at his ability as a craftsman.

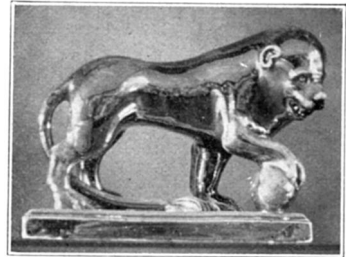
THE GURLEY COLLECTION

A COLLECTION of drawings by old masters recently presented to the Museum by Professor William F. E. Gurley in memory of his mother, Leonora Hall Gurley, is a most significant addition to the Art Institute's permanent collection. Professor Gurley has been twenty-five years in making his collection which consists of many hundred drawings, ranging from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century. Among the famous artists included are Van Eyck, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Titian, Correggio, Dürer, Rembrandt, Murillo, Velazquez, Rubens, Boucher, Piranesi, Poussin, Claude Lorrain, Hogarth, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Gainsborough, Turner, Benjamin West, Rossetti, and Millet. The stamps of collectors, such as Charles I, Queen Christina, Sir Thomas Lawrence, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and the British Museum give an indication of the high standard maintained by Professor Gurley. It is planned to exhibit a group of drawings from this collection in March in Gallery 43, adjoining the Print Room. This gallery has been set aside for the display of old masters' drawings which will be changed from time to time.

The Gurley Collection in conjunction with the Dutch, French, English, and American drawings, mostly of the modern period, already acquired by the Museum through various gifts and purchases, establishes an important new department and brings into prominence a branch of art hitherto inconspicuous at the Art Institute. The studies and sketches for portraits, easel paintings and decorations, the designs for book illustration and engraving contained in this voluminous group will prove a veritable mine of research material for the student, the importance of which can hardly be overestimated.



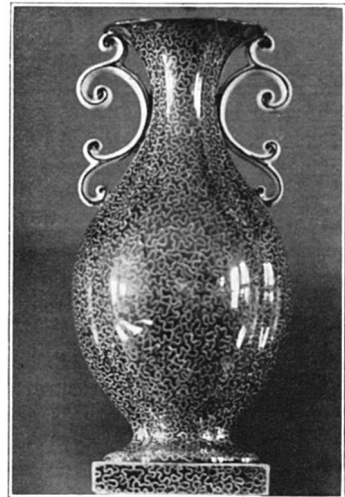
"SPLASH" BY WEDGWOOD



"ALL-OVER" SILVER BY RALPH WOOD



CLEWES



"VERMICELLI" BY WOOD
LUSTRE FROM BUCKINGHAM COLLECTION